

## **Finding common ground: an approach to pairing the communities' and researchers' interests**

Research concerning endangered languages has evolved from research *on* such languages, to research *for* their speaker communities, and more recently to research *with* speakers of endangered languages (Grinevald & Bert 2011:62). Such collaborations between communities and linguists are by now considered best practice and an idealized goal (Leonard & Haynes 2010) to foster more equitable relationships (Rice 2006).

Despite powerful initiatives that place community members at the heart of documentation projects, it is often still an outsider who is in charge of designing, initiating, and implementing projects around their own agendas (Woodbury 2011:175). In these proposals, language documentation and its traditional outcomes (e.g. a dictionary) are commonly advertised as means to promote language maintenance or revitalization. When working with the Dâw (Naduhup, Brazil), the community did not express particular interest in this approach, and instead, invited me on trips mapping their ancestral territories and paths as a way of preserving this particular knowledge and the language used to talk about it. As a result, we increasingly changed the foci of our projects by targeting a topic that was an urgent priority for the community, namely traditional territory, using language documentation as a tool to pair both the community's and the researcher's goals.

Here, I discuss an alternative approach to language documentation which can be successful when utilized as an instrument that accompanies a project chosen by the community rather than following a strict documentation agenda. Such an approach allows us to gain deeper knowledge of the language and its context, to build better relationships with a community, to attend to more immediate interests of speakers, as well as to foster mutual apprenticeship (Woodbury 2011:175). Finally, this work revisits the question of how we can ensure that academic activities benefit communities' language efforts to keep languages alive.

### **References**

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